

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 432

JC 940 255

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TITLE A Framework for Fundamental Change in the Community College: Creating a Culture of Responsiveness.
INSTITUTION Macomb Community Coll., Warren, MI. Inst. for Future Studies.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 34p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.)
(120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; *Change Strategies; College Planning; College Role; *Community Colleges; *Educational Change; Educational Theories; *Futures (of Society); *Institutional Mission; *Organizational Change; Social Change; Technological Advancement; Two Year Colleges

IDENTIFIERS *Information Age

ABSTRACT

Based on the assumption that the agenda for the nation's community colleges must change in fundamental ways to be able to respond to the emerging expectations of the Information Age, this monograph describes a comprehensive framework for reinventing the core elements of institutional life. Following an introduction, the basic suppositions underlying the framework are reviewed, including the notion that the colleges need fundamental, rather than incremental, change; that fundamental change is necessary when solutions available from institutions are inadequate for society's problems; that new skills and talents are required to resolve current problems; and that the overall goal for colleges is to relate a comprehensive mission to societal circumstances. Next, the following 10 elements of a framework for fundamentally changing the community college agenda are described: (1) think holistically, setting priorities based on community needs, college needs, unit needs, and then staff needs; (2) streamline governance to improve the pace of decision making; (3) redefine roles and redesign work by exploring the strategies of faculty specialization, adaptability, cross functionality, or the use of part-time personnel; (4) diversify funding; (5) provide more options to communities through the use of customized contract programs; (6) assure relevancy of programs and curricula; (7) apply new technology to teaching and learning; (8) cultivate new intra- and inter-institutional relationships; (9) change success criteria from input measures to actual outcomes; and (10) facilitate continuous learning. Includes six scenarios of college planning to encourage discussion of framework elements. A list of individuals interviewed in the development of the framework is appended. (KP)

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Macomb Press

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*A Framework for Fundamental Change
in the Community College:
Creating a Culture of Responsiveness*
is part of the **Strategic Direction Series**

published by The Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College,
Dr. William J. Banach, Executive Director,
14500 E. 12 Mile Road, Warren, MI 48093-3896, 810/445-7100

A Framework for Fundamental Change in the Community College:

Creating a Culture of Responsiveness

by Albert L. Lorenzo and Nancy Armes LeCroy

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A Framework for Fundamental Change in the Community College: Creating a Culture of Responsiveness

This monograph works from the assumption that the agenda for America's community colleges needs to change in fundamental ways—that although these institutions can surely build on their history and community-based roots, the future will require them to meet more precisely the emerging expectations, attitudes, and conditions of the Information Age. Of course, the authors clearly recognize that such a reinvention process has already begun on many campuses, but it is our belief that these changes typically lack a cohesive structure, one which can be followed through the remainder of the century and into the next to provide continuity and coherence. *This study seeks to develop that more comprehensive view—an essential framework for leading fundamental change in the community college.*

As the case is laid out and the framework discussed, several assumptions will become apparent. In each case, they make explicit suppositions which could easily refer to the broad panorama of societal change, but are summarized here because we believe them to be basic to the community college's consideration of its future.

- The core need is for fundamental, rather than incremental, change.
- Times of fundamental change are characterized by a lack of fit between the problems pressing in on society and the solutions that its institutions have available to remedy them.
- Amid such societal disequilibrium, new skills, talents, and language are required to establish better fit and a more coherent path.
- The overall goal for the community college is to create a culture of responsiveness that more clearly relates its comprehensive mission to these new societal circumstances.

The need for dramatic movement grows out of the tumultuous times in which we live, times in which all manner of indicators point toward the necessity for more than incremental change.

It is our contention that many traditions, habits, skills, and methodologies that are part of community college life will need to be reinvented as part of a period of fundamental change. The framework is our effort to describe components of this new culture. In effect, it represents our best thinking about an agenda for the tumultuous times ahead.

A Closer Look at the Assumptions

In order to put the framework in context and provide brief background, we begin with a closer look at the four assumptions.

1. *The core need is for fundamental rather than incremental change.* We believe fundamental change, change which influences the very core of institutional life, is needed in order to respond effectively to the Information Age. Brought on as it is by new societal demands, this comprehensive change will, of necessity, require the community college to examine its founding principles, mission and social purpose; its governance and decision-making processes; the traditional roles of faculty and administration; and the operating practices and delivery systems it typically employs. When an institution such as the community college contemplates the possibility of an actual transformation, the first question it inevitably asks is what are the compelling reasons to shift from strategies typically associated with incremental change, which are quite familiar to us, to this new conversation about reinventing the core elements of institutional life.

The first reason is almost too obvious to say. The need for dramatic movement grows out of the tumultuous times in which we live, times in which all manner of indicators point toward the necessity for more than incremental change. Consider only these few aspects of contemporary American life which will have so much influence on the community college's future.

Economically, our nation's position is declining relative to other first world industrial powers. Work productivity and Gross Domestic Product are increasing at only half the rate of our not too distant past. Financially, the nation's banking and thrift institutions are only now beginning to emerge from a failure rate which surpassed the Great Depression, and the national debt remains a formidable obstacle in spite of the passage of one of the largest federal tax increases in history.

The condition of the American family provides more personal and painful reminders of these economic realities. The middle class is shrinking; for every one household moving up the personal income ladder, two are moving down. The result is the widest gap between the super rich and the working poor in our nation's history. Many analysts believe our quality of life is at risk. Fordham University's "Index of Social Health" attempts to monitor the wellbeing of American society by examining Census Bureau statistics on 16 major social problems, including teen suicide, drug abuse, high school dropout rate, unemployment, child abuse, and housing affordability. That index, which began tracking data with the 1970 census, peaked in 1972 at 79 on a scale of 100. Since then, it has been in a down trend, falling to 42 in 1990 and to an all-time low of 36 for 1991, the latest year that data is available (Institute for Innovation and Social Policy, 1993).

Further aggravating these stresses—stretching the fabric of communal life to dangerous limits—are such matters as environmental depletion and risk, deteriorating infrastructures, and the volatile tensions and patterns of crime and violence associated with race, culture, and class. These pervasive and stubborn problems add layer upon layer of interconnected trauma to daily life.

Looking more specifically at education, surveys repeatedly show that voter and employer confidence in public schools is low. This is true despite the fact that some indicators of student achievement and school performance are modestly improving. Nor are post-secondary institutions free of criticism. In fact, recent research has drawn a parallel between tendencies exhibited by higher education and those found unacceptable in the health care industry—rapidly escalating costs, minimal customer sensitivity and professional accountability, controversial business practices, and questionable return on the public's investment.

Our second assumption, therefore, posits that we are moving into a new age—one in which the mechanistic model first applied to managing physical work in the Industrial Age no longer applies to the kind of work we do or the kinds of strategies our organizations need to pursue.

Another, closely related reason to consider fundamental change is our current diminished capacity to solve these prevailing societal problems. In large part, the litany of woes such as those described here often seems overwhelming to us because the nation's political institutions, indeed all its public institutions, have failed repeatedly in recent years to generate effective solutions. When leaders contemplate the issues that trouble people most, public debate is much too often adversarial, unproductive, and does not address the issues. Much too often, there is little agreement about what to do to make things better. Much too often, when decisions are made, they are ineffective because public support for them is not strong enough. Even when there is unmistakable consensus on the need for change, as in recent examples of health care and public school reform, there has been no clear agreement on how to change.

2. Times of fundamental change are characterized by a lack of fit between the problems pressing in on society and the solutions that its institutions have available to remedy them. In spite of the disturbing signposts, some still would maintain that there is nothing new about the problems we face—that only their proportions have grown. These are the advocates for incremental change who, generally speaking, believe reformers within and outside our institutions should further refine solutions by stressing efficiency and effectiveness. In effect, their argument says that current institutional structures are basically adequate, that we as professionals must learn to work smarter, better, faster, etc.

But if, on the other hand, one builds the argument on our first premise—that at this point, there are dramatic, fundamental differences emerging in American life—then it is reasonable to assume that placing more effort behind current strategies will not suffice. Our second assumption, therefore, posits that we are moving into a new age—

one in which the mechanistic model first applied to managing physical work in the Industrial Age no longer applies to the kind of work we do or the kinds of strategies our organizations need to pursue. Certainly we are not alone in this view. Scholars and analysts continue to experiment with language to describe the different conditions we face. In various works, they describe these dramatic changes as the beginning of a new era—the Information Age or the Knowledge Society or the Post Modern Age. Or they dramatize the changes as a paradigm shift or an era of disequilibrium. Or they describe our task as one of bringing order out of chaos or reinventing ourselves.

Indeed, the renowned futurist Alvin Toffler (1980) foreshadowed these descriptions more than a decade ago with the following watershed statement:

A new civilization is emerging in our lives, and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it. This new civilization brings with it new family styles, changed ways of working, loving, and living; a new economy; new political conflicts; and above all this an altered consciousness as well.

The dawn of this new civilization is the single most explosive fact of our lifetime. It is the central event—the key to understanding the years immediately ahead. It is an event as profound as the First Wave of change unleashed 10,000 years ago by the invention of agriculture, or the earth-shaking Second Wave of change touched off by the Industrial Revolution. We are the children of the next transformation, the Third Wave (p. 25).

If we are right and lack of fit is the appropriate description, then the constant assessment of failure that is so much a part of today's rhetoric clearly misses the mark. In particular, it is a rhetoric that has taken sharp jabs at our public institutions. How long have we heard, for example; that if our high school graduates are not prepared for work, then our public schools must have failed? Or that if our communities are hotbeds of crime and violence, then our political and criminal justice systems must have failed? That if our nation is not globally competitive, then our country's workforce and managers must have failed? Such views not only gloss over significant, hard-won accomplishments, they have also produced meager results. As a host of reform efforts have demonstrated for a decade or more, working from a premise of failure has led to only modest improvements.

Here the Industrial Revolution provides a useful parallel. It too was a time in Western civilization when there was clear and dramatic evidence of transition into a new age and, ultimately, to a more advanced society. It was a time when many of the social institutions and structures no longer fit. As many commentators have suggested, the social upheaval and destruction of jobs during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution produced similar social trauma more than a century ago, including widespread drunkenness, child abuse and crime, deterioration of family life, etc. (Eckersley, 1993). But, gradually, as the new fit was established over a longer span of years and social institutions adjusted, growing numbers of Industrial Age citizenry found a better standard of living, a greater voice in government and more widespread access to education. Our belief is a similar pattern will emerge as part of the current fundamental shift.

Finally, our "fit rather than failure" assumption is a particularly appropriate premise for community colleges. It would be decidedly wrong-headed for this institution to see itself as failing to respond to community-based needs. In fact, we share the widely held view that community colleges are much further down the road in responsiveness than other segments of education. Even so, many traditional structures and mechanisms which community colleges have relied on seem inadequate when matched against current circumstances. They lack the necessary problem-solving fit and will require that new and different methodologies be developed. In our view, this reinvention process will make it quite possible that the community college of the 21st century will be as different from the present as today's comprehensive institutions are from the junior colleges in the first half of our century.

Rather than analyzing and repairing each problem separately, Information Age change agents will be required to synthesize and coalesce, to find cross disciplinary solutions.

3. *Amid such societal disequilibrium, new skills, talents, and language will be required to establish better fit and a more coherent path.* Our fundamental change and lack of fit conclusions make it naive to assume present community college problem-solving strategies are adequate. Rather, it is our sense that the myriad of political, economic, and social challenges facing us can only be resolved with new thinking processes and stratagems.

The reasons are not only obvious but, again, frequently referenced in the literature. The new variety of problems must be seen in relationship to one another. Rather than analyzing and repairing each problem separately, Information Age change agents will be required to synthesize and coalesce, to find cross disciplinary solutions. They will need to understand how the pieces balance off one another, how changing one element changes the rest, how sequencing and pace affects the whole. They will need to attend to the personal concerns of colleagues and to cope with constant ambiguity.

Throughout the framework presented in this monograph are clues about the kinds of talents and skills that will be needed. There is, for example, strong advocacy for teamwork and the frequent mention of working in cross disciplinary teams. There is also the clear recognition that the context of change will be as important as the content of change. Community college personnel will need skills similar to those the private sector is cultivating, as transition teams run interference on the change process by attending not only to products, but to processes and feelings.

In particular, the use of language will become key. Too often, innovators can bog down because the verbiage available to them becomes unnecessarily restricting. As they work to crystalize a new vision, their words carry unpleasant or limiting or old-fashioned connotations and conjure pictures that carry the heavy weight of past

experiences rather than future opportunities. *Thus, one important skill will be the ability to expand and adapt language to describe the new reality.* Our best advice in this regard is to become playful with language when it pertains to aspects of fundamental change. Usage may rely on colloquialisms, hyphenations, newly coined terms, and the extensive use of figurative language. Playful language, the language of brainstorming, can become a powerful tool for participants who have agreed to suspend disbelief for a time and search out refreshing, new insights.

In a culture of responsiveness, a community college performs like a mobile. Aspects of college life are more flexible and dynamic.

None of these undertakings will be easy because of the traditions and habits of academe. The patterns of problem-solving in our learning environments are to attend to each piece in isolation and to work independently—tendencies growing out of the penchant for in-depth analysis. There is also a reverence for historical perspective and exactitude that tends to dismiss the language and intent of innovative work as faddish. In our view, reinvention in higher education, even in a community college setting, will be a more complex assignment than the private sector has undertaken both because of the long-held traditions in the learning community and the multiple purposes and constituencies educators represent.

4. *Thus, the overall goal for the community college is to create a culture of responsiveness that more clearly relates its comprehensive mission to these new societal circumstances.* It is not easy to describe the new environment we envision. In the old paradigm, the image that most frequently comes to mind is of an organizational chart, with its tiers of boxes connected by mostly solid lines indicating a stable pattern of decision-making. In the new paradigm, the best image we can contrive in its stead is of a mobile, an abstract sculpture that an artist creates to depict movement and to represent kinetic rather than static relationships.

In a culture of responsiveness, a community college performs like a mobile. Aspects of college life are more flexible and dynamic. Not only do functions overlap, but there is constant movement between them. Most important, although the mobile retains a harmonious sense of the whole entity, *its shape does not remain the same.* Both its beauty and its interest depend on the relationships among the moving parts which change in response to external forces—a gentle breeze, a vibration, a touch. While retaining a core identity, this highly sensitive apparatus demonstrates its beauty in the way it responds to outside stimulation.

But what does such an image suggest about day-to-day college patterns? It suggests a world where speed and flexibility become key operating principles. Because fewer uniform tasks remain and more cut across the organization, trust becomes essential, as does a willingness to deal with constant ambiguity. The flow of work is frequently

episodic—initiatives come and go, based on need. Teamwork becomes more common as the tasks, terms and schedules of employment vary to meet present need. In such a world, a semester may well become one of many calendar units; professionals may perform a variety of tasks over a year; traditional organizational boundaries become more permeable; and the organization places a premium on collaborative skills.

However, in our view, a glimpse of the entire culture still does not provide the specificity and detail practitioners need to plan a course of action. This need for greater concreteness is the reason for the framework we are presenting. Through it, we have attempted to flesh out ten key components that better define the new culture as a whole. To continue our analogy, these elements would be comparable to the materials, tools, techniques, and skills that the artist uses to produce the mobile.

A Word About Our Research Process

Before discussing the elements of the framework, a word about our research process. Insights from three sources proved to be most helpful in developing the framework and coalescing our thoughts about a culture of responsiveness. First has been the careful consideration of those aspects of the emerging age which have the greatest likelihood of affecting the future of community colleges. A report published by the Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College (Banach and Lorenzo, 1993) has identified twenty-one dimensions of the emerging context for life in America that have implications for academic organizations. These factors include demographic, economic, and political issues as well as changing lifestyles and consumer preferences. Taken collectively, they offer considerable insight into how the operating environment for our nation's two-year colleges is likely to be reshaped as they move into the next century.

Second, we have searched out benchmarking examples. Although many American companies are still encountering difficulty, several have been able to transform themselves into globally competitive enterprises. Since change in the public sector typically lags behind the private sector, we believe that there are valuable lessons which can be learned from the recent experiences of the best of American business. While there are many fine works on the subject, particular insight was gained from Beckhard and Pritchard (1992), Osborne and Gaebler (1992), Peters (1988), Reich (1991), and Senge (1990).

Finally, building on this theoretical backdrop, we have elicited opinions of acknowledged experts within the community college movement (see list in Appendix A). In these interviews, 27 higher education leaders have shared their perspectives on the fundamental changes they see as essential to the future success of community colleges. The sessions were structured as "cascading research," with the topics and formats for later interviews refined based on what was learned in previous conversations. In every case, however, discussion themes included the founding philosophy of the community college, its traditional and evolving mission, institutional governance, faculty and leadership roles, operating practices, and delivery systems.

In our efforts to organize learning gleaned from these various sources, we made several decisions and wrestled with several problems which deserve to be briefly discussed here.

- First, it is important to realize that rather than reporting the consensus of the experts, we are identifying their recurrent themes. The proposed framework is our attempt to structure these themes but is not intended to suggest that there were not differences of opinion and different priorities expressed.
- Because the leaders who speculated in interviews about the future of community colleges provided such illuminating and provocative assessments, we will try to give the reader some sense of these conversations—pointing out key similarities and differences.

- The elements named and boundaries created by this framework are artificial. As in any such categorization, they contain overlap and repetition. The ten elements simply represent our best efforts to create clear categories and provide an appropriate level of detail.
- We freely admit our own biases come to bear in the framework. Although every element discussed here was a recurrent theme in our investigative process, the framework is intended to be more reflective rather than statistically derived.
- The framework is intended to provide a comprehensive look at possible elements of fundamental change, but it is in no way a template for community colleges to implement *in toto*. Some components of the framework will have much more utility to a particular college than others. It is rather offered as a point of departure for a college beginning or continuing its dialogue about the future. Certainly, any college using this monograph should test its own views of the future against the four assumptions that begin the narrative.

A Framework for Fundamental Change: Ten Elements

Think holistically

Moving toward a more holistic perspective is the essential prerequisite for accomplishing fundamental change and creating a culture of responsiveness within our institutions. As a result, holistic thinking becomes the critical context within which other elements in the framework will best flourish.

Basically, an institution such as the community college begins to think holistically when it comes to view itself as part of a much larger socioeconomic system, rather than an independent and semi-autonomous entity. In the process, the college comes to understand that its ongoing viability depends on how well it can adjust to changes. It learns that ignoring community voices creates almost immediate, often quite visible, public dissonance and that responsiveness means listening and sorting through the many voices that may be speaking at once.

In other words, holistic thinking suggests to practitioners that a fundamental strategy for the Information Age is to set priorities through an outside-in thinking process: (1) what's best for the community; (2) what's best for the college; (3) what's best for the unit; (4) what's best for staff.

In a similar way, through holistic thinking, various units within the college learn how important it is to place greater emphasis on the betterment of the total institution. Individual agendas that distract the college become less and less typical because they do long-term damage to the institution. In other words, holistic thinking suggests to practitioners that a fundamental strategy for the Information Age is to set priorities through an outside-in thinking process: (1) what's best for the community; (2) what's best for the college; (3) what's best for the unit; (4) what's best for staff.

Developing a comfort level in this key area is not easy and requires significant departures from "normal" ways of thinking. American higher education has historically placed high value on autonomy and academic freedom and has implicitly and explicitly reinforced patterns of independent behavior. But today's new environment is bringing with it an insistent demand for a connectedness and interdependence that is quite different from these more familiar patterns. The discomfort is not unlike one the entire workforce has inherited from the Industrial Revolution. In the old paradigm, laborers were discouraged from thinking broadly and were often expected to become little more than cogs in a mechanistic work reality. In the new, an employee's ability to see work-related problems within larger contexts becomes key.

A number of theoretical constructs have been emphasized of late to help us develop a comfort level with new, more holistic problem solving. Systems thinking is among the most promising of these. By suggesting that every level of our existence is composed of subsystems that are connected to a larger system, this comparatively new discipline shows us how to understand these connections and to live with such complexity. It causes us to look at relationships rather than events and helps us see patterns of change rather than static "snapshots."

Virtually all the leaders interviewed for this project valued holistic thinking even as they struggled to find appropriate methodologies that would make this approach more relevant to community colleges. They described community colleges as connectors, translators, and interpreters involved in a symbiotic network of relationships. They constantly placed such issues as the need for diversity or for program relevance within the context of a larger world view. They spoke of creating new, more horizontal decision-making structures and of creating a seamless web of services for the external community. Although clearly understanding the complexity and ambiguity of such an approach, in general they found considerable excitement in it. As several commented, understanding that we are all one system turns competitors into collaborators and overlooked needs into targets of opportunity.

While the campus community may be willing to wait for a decision based on an extended, deliberative process, many of our external constituents are not.

Frankly, these leaders also found some danger in examining reality in these new ways. Perhaps the central tension they sensed was their own lack of sophistication in seeing and understanding all the relationships. Knowing when to partner with others and when to develop an area of distinctiveness, for example, is not an uncommon dilemma. Unfortunately, holistic thinking provides no easy formula-based answers. As systems theory posits, only to the extent that the system as a whole is understood will each separate response make sense.

Streamline governance

For the purposes of this narrative, we have defined governance as the ability to influence action and reach necessary determinations in a timely fashion. Using this definition, we have further concluded that at most community colleges these processes are entirely too slow, too political, and too easily stalemated. While our traditional decision-making methods may have served the needs of the Industrial Age, they are hardly a model for success in the age of fax machines, satellite communications, and interactive video. In particular, the pace of decision making has a direct bearing on the community college's perceived responsiveness in the community.

While the campus community may be willing to wait for a decision based on an extended, deliberative process, many of our external constituents are not. Quite simply, then, the goal is to find a way to pick up the pace of governance.

Fortunately, there is an available resource to bring to bear on the problem. Research points again and again to the way high quality, carefully targeted information can improve and hasten decision making. But such processes are not well defined in most community colleges. Historically, academic decisions have been based almost exclusively on personal and professional opinion with participants simply bringing their collective thoughts to the discussion table. In the Information Age, this will not suffice. Although most community colleges produce a wealth of data which can improve the quality of decision-making, the challenge remains not only to systematize but to quicken the deliberative process through this data's effective introduction and use.

In the interviews, leaders not only expressed the need for greater speed in decision making and considerable frustration that college information was not better used; they also offered sometimes detailed accounts of the ways in which institutions get bogged down in their decision making activities. There was, for example, frequent reference to single interest or special interest groups both inside and outside the organization and on governing boards. There was similar reference to the ways collective bargaining slows decision-making processes, although there was also a recurring thread of optimism that pointed toward new win/win negotiation strategies beginning to emerge.

Potential solutions were less definitively described, but nevertheless much discussed. They included ways to flatten the organization, to build cross-functional teams, to use information technologies to speed efforts. In particular, technology was seen as the catalyst that would make the needed information much more accessible.

...it is not surprising that the most referenced topic in our interviews was the role faculty would play in fundamental change.

Redefine roles and redesign work

A characteristic feature of those organizations successfully transitioning into the Information Age is their ability to structure new roles and redesign work.

One promising source of ideas to help community colleges with this restructuring is the private sector. Corporate America has already implemented many of the strategies community colleges are beginning to consider: creative use of part-time employees, cross disciplinary teams, and the contracting and purchasing of services from the outside, to name a few. By downsizing and flattening its organizations, business has also begun to challenge traditional patterns of supervision and structure. Community colleges can learn a great deal from many of these innovations.

But because educational institutions rely so heavily on the front line professionals who provide direct educational services, it is not surprising that the most referenced topic in our interviews was the role faculty would play in fundamental change. Although virtually all leaders were intent on redefining instructional roles to increase the speed and flexibility of the community college's response, the strategies they explored varied considerably. Several major strands of their thinking are worth exploring briefly here.

One approach beginning to take shape is *specialization*. Working from the assumption that it is illogical to expect all faculty to excel equally in all aspects of the delivery of instruction, this view holds that faculty might better be asked to perform distinct functions. At least four potential areas of specialization were identified—designing curriculum, presenting information, managing the learning process, and assessing learning outcomes.

A second, frequently referenced strategy might be termed *adaptability*. In this approach, faculty roles become less structured in order to increase the college's speed and flexibility. Formulas for determining teaching load, for example, are often described as artifacts unnecessarily encumbering the college's ability to vary instructional roles. Why not build schedules and assign tasks in a more fluid and transitional fashion? Then faculty can perform new and different tasks over a career, developing a wide range of expertise and accumulating a varied work portfolio. They might manage a lab during one phase, develop curriculum during another, and act as master teacher supervising part-timers during another—with expectations and rewards changing as appropriate.

A third strategy some leaders probed was *cross functionality*. This view stresses the goal of accomplishing more instructional work across disciplines and functional areas. Such crossover tactics would make it possible to build faculty teams that combine diverse specializations, interests, and even demography. They could perform as fast-moving, problem-solving groups charged with specific tasks and freed from typical academic red tape. Such an approach also makes it easier for the college as a whole to gear up for the next project because it encourages an ongoing pattern of cross training.

A final strategy discussed with surprising frequency was the *use of part-time faculty*. If part-timers could be better supported and mobilized, leaders speculated that they could provide colleges a much needed speed and flexibility edge. In fact, there may be some value in developing an entirely new class of part-time faculty. If they were utilized more as consultants and specialists with their talents choreographed to fill in instructional gaps, not only would their usefulness grow, but so would their status and marketplace value.

Woven throughout these discussions of faculty role were also interesting tensions: should traditional and nontraditional academic structures and teaching assignments be blended; should the credit and noncredit, liberal and technical sides of the house be integrated; should expectations placed on new faculty and senior faculty be the same? These are appropriate quandaries for colleges struggling with how to make the best transition between old and new paradigms.

Diversify Funding

Limited in their funding options at state and local levels and believing as they do that dramatic change is underway, community colleges are looking for ways to take the offensive in the funding arena. Their growing consensus is two-fold: constraints on traditional revenue sources will remain through the balance of this decade, if not beyond; and "doing more with less" is simply not a viable long-term strategy. The consensus is that sooner or later, the only thing that comes from less is less.

Limited in their funding options at state and local levels and believing as they do that dramatic change is underway, community colleges are looking for ways to take the offensive in the funding arena.

Although there is little apparent panic as funding options are examined, this particular arena is one in which leaders are clearly in search of better strategies. As they work to reinvent their institutions, the first assumption is the need for rigorous fiscal discipline—to work smarter and leaner, to look at outsourcing and privatization strategies, etc. But those interviewed also believed it will be necessary to develop more entrepreneurial options, with the basic intent of diversifying funding enough to provide the needed edge for reinvention. For example, some community colleges are exploring differential pricing—by kind of student or community agent served, geography, level of service, etc. As they debate the viability of these different pricing approaches, they are searching out workable strategies designed to lessen their overall dependency on traditional revenue sources.

Many leaders we interviewed are also beginning to think quite creatively about how better to define their market niche and bolster their grantsmanship and philanthropic activities. They are building endowments and learning how to respond effectively to initiatives funded by state and federal government. They are learning that not only speed and flexibility are required in grantsmanship but also a much greater willingness to collaborate. Fewer funders are willing to underwrite stand-alone projects but are, instead, supporting initiatives that connect major players in today's "all one system" reality. As one college president suggested, collaboration is an extremely difficult discipline to learn, but once learned, it opens many new doors of opportunity for garnering resources.

A number of related dilemmas grow out of these basic funding strategies. These are some of the quandaries we heard:

- How to reward college entrepreneurs—both individuals and teams—and distribute the special revenues they generate;

- How to redesign budget formulas, which many feel are artifacts of the old paradigm;
- How to develop (1) short-term budget strategies that support the initial capital outlay for instructional technology and (2) longer-term pricing strategies that take advantage of technology's potential commercial value;
- How to price learning provided outside the service area, especially when such provision involves expanded use of new technologies;
- How to apply market niche expertise to national and international markets;
- How to structure long-term contracts with corporate America.

Provide more options

In a culture of responsiveness, the need to provide more options is inevitable. After all, one characteristic of the Information Age is that the society to be served is demassifying—demanding more and more choices.

Although community colleges have clearly endorsed the value of providing choices, they have sometimes been forced to admit their inability to deliver on these promises. For example, they have not always provided the range of options needed for lifelong learning. If we might speak metaphorically, community college responsiveness to adult learners has sometimes been like Henry Ford's promotion of the Model T: you can have any color you want as long as it's black. Perhaps our ad should read: you can have any course you want as long as it's on the semester calendar and can be offered at times and places convenient to us. As several interviewed reminded, education has historically been offered at the college's convenience, not the student's, and even community colleges have been slow to change certain practices.

Virtually all agreed, however, that we can learn a great deal from the "shadow college," precisely because it shows us better ways to achieve the goal of responsiveness.

There is, however, widespread conviction that these tendencies will change, as well as the growing sense that many strategies which been around for some time—home study, open entry/open exit, satellite learning centers, credit for experience, child care provision—will increasingly prosper.

As perhaps its biggest success story in providing more options, many community college institutions have begun to offer customized programs. Typically, however, these options have been provided outside the mainstream of academic life by noncredit and/or entrepreneurial units that have in some sense been exempted from

traditional college patterns and protocol. These "shadow colleges," as several referred to them, are freer to modify calendar, content, and delivery systems to meet specific client needs. As a result, they have often been able to negotiate full cost recovery or even cost plus pricing.

Some we interviewed argued that the shadow college is harmful to the vitality of the community college. Others, that it represents the college's future—by becoming a kind of experimental lab which fosters innovation and primes the institution for the new tasks at hand. Still others wrestled with whether the traditional college and the shadow college should be integrated or kept separate. Virtually all agreed, however, that we can learn a great deal from the "shadow college," precisely because it shows us better ways to achieve the goal of responsiveness.

In fact, emerging technology is generally seen as the single most important factor in redefining the processes of education and the methodology of teaching and learning.

There were caveats expressed, of course, about this element of the framework. Because providing wide-ranging options presents enormous administrative and instructional complexity, leaders doubted that any one institution should provide all the options. They surmised, in fact, that community colleges will look less and less alike and that their dissimilarity will make it harder to explain their role to public policy shapers. More than one imaged the evolution of tiers of institutions based on the kinds of expertise and options a college chose to develop. Some would define their community in national or even international terms, while others would concentrate almost exclusively on developing new and more powerful local options.

Assure relevancy

In a time of fundamental change, the substance and shape of key aspects of college life will surely need to be reconfigured to assure relevancy. One of our assumptions, after all, is that there is a growing lack of fit in society's institutions between old forms and new substance. Unfortunately, much of what the "relevancy gap" reveals about existing programs will be difficult and even painful for practitioners to repair.

Community colleges need to be asking questions like these: Are current programs relevant? If not, how can they be made so? When made relevant, how can they be kept relevant? Finding good answers not only demands honesty and introspection, it also requires constant dialogue with internal and external customers—even with competitors. A host of such competitors are constantly entering today's post-secondary market, including K through 12, adult education programs, private and proprietary schools, corporate and vendor sponsored training, and for-profit, high-

tech learning enterprises. To maintain their own relevance, community colleges will need to better understand the motivation and appeal of these other providers.

As relevancy issues were explored, the curriculum drew the most interview comment. Frankly, many respondents had serious concerns about the community college's current ability to adjust with speed and dexterity to marketplace demands. For example, there was a widespread conviction that our colleges have dropped the ball in responding to the insistent employer priority that workers develop strong general as well as technical skills. Overall, it was felt our colleges have failed to produce workers with the skills needed to learn continually on the job, or to work effectively in teams, or to communicate clearly. The opposite concerns were expressed as well—wondering about the community college's ability to stay technically current, given the enormous pace of innovation in the workplace. As one commented, these are concerns that have been around a long time, but there still doesn't seem to be much new.

Leaders raised similar questions about other aspects of institutional life. Is the associate degree still a relevant goal and, if so, for whom? Does the academic calendar meet the needs of the "new learner"? Are search processes well matched to staffing needs? Have multicultural learning goals been marginalized? Do some aspects of institutional life currently discourage lifelong learning? As community colleges seek to assure relevancy, the list of challenges becomes quite long.

Apply technology

Just as steam, electricity and internal combustion powered the Industrial Age, computers and communication technologies are driving the transition to the Information Age. Precisely because speed and flexibility are the hallmarks of a culture of responsiveness, technology becomes the electricity that will make the engine run. In fact, emerging technology is generally seen as the single most important factor in redefining the processes of education and the methodology of teaching and learning.

Indeed, an important interview theme was that the locus of community college relationships would need to shift from "teaching" to "learning", from faculty-centered to student-centered.

Inevitably, when proposed change suggests particularly thorny logistical problems, community college leaders turn to technology for answers, seeing it as a virtual boundary breaker. When the challenges have to do with reaching an enormously diverse student population, technology is seen as providing a cluster of powerful, value-free tools capable of reaching all manner of students, particularly those who do not excel in traditional academic settings. In effect, when students can pick it up, check it out, turn it on, and interact with it—virtually at any time and place—

traditional horizons in the learning environment expand enormously. Or when the logistics of providing more and more options grow particularly cumbersome, technology becomes the way to simplify these tasks. Or when the need for greater variety of information and expertise is extolled, commentators again turn to the ability of technology to connect educators to resource networks of astounding proportions.

But while pondering the opportunities presented by the Information Super Highway or interactive learning, several quite real hurdles appear as well—cost, ease of use and willingness to use. Several CEOs we talked to are already experimenting with front loaded funding schemes and cooperative product development ventures to control costs better and were excited about early results. There was less satisfaction, however, with strategies underway to select and develop much needed technical competence in employees. Leaders also commented that although community colleges have moved rather quickly to apply new technologies to administrative functions, they have been much slower to apply technology to improve instruction.

Interestingly, the community college's continuing "reluctant relationship" with public schools was mentioned most often as an area of disappointment.

Whatever the obstacles, not only are the experts virtually unanimous in their opinion that technology can help community colleges create a culture of responsiveness, they express great personal excitement about these possibilities.

Cultivate new relationships

As has already been made clear in our assumptions, special human skills and relationships are needed in times of transition. Precisely because of the inherent interdependencies of the Information Age, a different, more relational context must be created. The questions to be asked in fostering these relationships are simple but enormously challenging: Can we be honest? Can we build trust? Can we set aside single interest agendas? Can we cross traditional boundaries and share power and resources in new ways? In a college environment that routinely reinforces a deeply ingrained love of autonomy, these are no small matters.

To begin to cultivate new patterns, community colleges need to examine their relationships on several levels. Associations within the college are a logical place to begin. Is it possible to move from a preponderance of line decision making to team decisions? Can decision making be streamlined? Can the adversarial labor-management relationships characteristic of the Industrial Age be recast into win/win structures appropriate to the Information Age? Can faculty become more comfortable with the roles of consultant and coach than information provider? Indeed, an important

interview theme was that the locus of community college relationships would need to shift from "teaching" to "learning", from faculty-centered to student-centered. As several commented, this change may well drive all the others.

The external challenges sound equally familiar. Can community colleges pursue synergy through partnerships and develop more permeable relationships with other public and private institutions? Can they, in fact, avoid duplication, waste and debilitating gaps in service by more effectively sharing power and resources across institutional boundaries? Although the rhetoric for collaboration has grown familiar, leaders remained unconvinced that the Rubicon has been crossed. If we are where we need to be, then tech-prep, school-to-work, and Jobs Training Partnership Act initiatives would have produced more pervasive change. Here, interview rhetoric was often heated: unless and until such institutional fixtures as budget planning, reporting relationships, and training programs begin to move across institutional lines, the associations that develop will be more a part of the old paradigm than the new. Interestingly, the community college's continuing "reluctant relationship" with public schools was mentioned most often as an area of disappointment.

In order to sustain themselves in the new order, community colleges will need to create new relationships with the *public at large*. Good will, built through the years, cannot be taken for granted in the days ahead when trust will be difficult to sustain and the lack of it will ultimately mean diminished resources and increased scrutiny. Generally, leaders issued a good report card here: community colleges have built genuine friendships by keeping costs down and by maintaining a community-based service orientation. The fear is that we may become complacent. Because the public's trust rests on its ability to understand and appreciate our mission, the leader's role as interpreter and ambassador will only grow.

It is our sense that outcomes are much more likely to give a useful reading on how well the institution is handling change.

Finally, woven through all these levels of community college relationships are emphatic, growing demands to cultivate higher quality interactions based on race, ethnicity, sex and class. In spite of our historic commitment to access, various commentators believe that both courage and tenacity will be required to achieve the necessary level of sophistication. Thus it is not surprising that in several interview instances, CEOs indicated a growing willingness to flex some muscle in this regard—to make their goals clearer and shift from voluntary to required measures. They described sending back searches, insisting on outreach to historically underserved groups and service areas, and listening to sometimes angry community voices with a clearer intention to remedy past wrongs. But these leaders also believe that in the long run the relationships formed will be the best teachers. As one summarized, "What is required is for the various players to experience the ways in which diversity strengthens

the outcome for everyone. Have you noticed that all of us—students, professionals, and community members—continue to move in cliques? We have to penetrate such invisible boundaries from time to time if we are to truly appreciate what diversity has to offer!"

Change success criteria

A sizable group of America's best organizations have learned the hard way that what led to success in the Industrial Age no longer applies in the Information Age. After absorbing staggering losses, the most responsive of these companies have managed to change, in the process developing new criteria for success.

It is somewhat ironic that the colleges which have brought the opportunity for learning to so broad a spectrum of American society have traditionally done so little to facilitate continuous learning among their own.

Community colleges should heed these lessons, in particular by moving away from traditional indices based on the old paradigm and becoming more proficient at measuring outcomes. In times of fundamental change, rather than concentrating on the input side—how many dollars were spent on each student, how many students were enrolled, how many full-time faculty were employed, or how many books were in the library, the focus needs to be on the output side—how well do students achieve, how effectively do programs serve employers, and what is the impact of community service on the community, etc. It is our sense that outcomes are much more likely to give a useful reading on how well the institution is handling change.

As part of this changing measurement process, methodologies which assess performance in nontraditional and developing mission areas will logically assume greater importance. But measuring these outcomes will not be easy. Recently, for example, when the Community College Roundtable set out to identify core outcome indicators of community college effectiveness, they found it quite difficult to identify measures for less traditional aspects of the community college mission and became particularly perplexed as they searched for concrete ways to assess college responsiveness to community needs (AACC Special Report, 1994). Many of these same assessment leaders worried in our subsequent interview sessions about the dangers implicit in the future if we have no credible way to evaluate our community outreach efforts. How are we to know if we are delivering on the promises implicit in these services?

Finally, as our leaders suggested with some frequency, it is not only how to measure responsiveness that is at issue; it is also how much to measure. CEOs, in particular, sense a clear tension in the almost antithetical expectations to demonstrate accountability *and* respond more broadly. As they suggested, it is so much easier to demonstrate accountability when options are limited. But when the complexity and unconventionality of tasks is expected to grow, assessment will pose a greater challenge.

Facilitate continuous learning

Since a central characteristic of the Information Age will be continuous change, the organization positioning itself to respond must demonstrate a similar capacity to grow. It must develop the processes that will enable it continually to update and strengthen itself to conform to new conditions. In recent years, these capabilities have come to be known as "organizational learning."

A comprehensive professional development program that concentrates on cultivating and enhancing needed qualities within college staff is the recognized mechanism for achieving such learning. It is an approach that will require a college to move away from today's sporadic and voluntary patterns to a continuous learning requirement for all employees. It is the reason Continuous Quality Improvement has become a primary mechanism for fostering such community college learning—precisely because it stresses the ongoing, perpetual need to develop individuals within the organization.

It is somewhat ironic that the colleges which have brought the opportunity for learning to so broad a spectrum of American society have traditionally done so little to facilitate continuous learning among their own. Perhaps for this reason, professional development became a particularly strong theme within the interviews. Leaders wanted more substantive development for new staff, for example, describing the need for an inculcation process that would extend over several years. As several commented, graduate schools too often imbue traditional professional views ill matched to new realities.

But even more, they wanted to undertake a comprehensive development program, one that would serve all staff continuously. As they talked, leaders fleshed out something like a formula—with each undertaking, the opportunity to learn new skills must become a standard feature of implementation. It must be woven into the fabric of college life in ways currently difficult to visualize. Variously imaged as a "college within a college", a "virtual college" or a "parallel college", this kind of development program would not only demand time, staff participation and resources, it would ask professionals to assume responsibility for new learning in much the same way students are asked to assume responsibility for their learning. Then, instead of a world of refining and repeating "old lessons," the community college could become an environment continually adapting to new educational opportunities. Instead of a segmented professional world where staff are isolated from one another, it could become a place where they are encouraged to work together to achieve a common purpose.

In an interesting way, this final element in the framework brings the proposed structure full circle. The organization committed to holistic thinking is, of necessity, the organization dedicated to continuous learning—constantly broadening its understanding on the one hand, while developing the capacities to take the next step on the other.

An Ongoing Conversation: Discussion Scenarios

In our view, we will have served our purpose in this monograph if we succeed in stimulating conversation at community colleges about the need for and the essential elements of fundamental change. To that end, we have included six discussion scenarios as the concluding section of the monograph. Each is designed to create an opportunity for campus-based dialogue that incorporates ideas and/or issues which the framework highlights.

We recommend that participants include the following dynamics in their discussions:

- **Openness**—if possible, step out of all special interest roles and look at organizational matters with “fresh eyes.”
- **Guidance**—at least to begin with, ask someone from outside the organization to facilitate the conversation—to give honest feedback and listen with “fresh ears.”
- **Playfulness**—become willing to suspend disbelief and to welcome inventiveness. As suggested earlier, playfulness with language is a wonderful strategy to use when the conversation bogs down.
- **Grounded**—try to begin the conversation with common reference points, preferably using a document such as this monograph to focus the discussion.

The scenarios which follow are set at the mythical Antioch Community College. Each is a sketch designed to be evocative—to suggest only the broad outlines, rather than the full detail of the situation. Although we ask that you assume you are part of this college as you discuss the scenario, please feel free to fill in or change these hypothetical situations with facts and circumstances that increase their relevance for your own college. However, the overall intent in creating the scenarios is to encourage those in conversation *to step out of their current reality* so that they can better examine these problems and possibilities in playful and open ways.

Discussion Scenario I

As Antioch Community College's Strategic Planning Team, you have been asked to set college priorities for the next five years. During lengthy deliberations, one particular aspect of college life has drawn your attention.

Antioch's early retirement program has resulted in a number of senior faculty—approximately a third—planning to retire over the next three years, a circumstance that will certainly have a major impact on the college's instructional future. As a result, your group is recommending this strategic goal to the college: to select and develop a new cadre of faculty that demonstrate the capacity

- to continuously learn;
- to use technology;
- to move across organizational boundaries—disciplines, credit/noncredit lines;
- to work in cross functional teams;
- to develop relationships with the external community.

Today your Strategic Planning Team's assignment is to outline ways that Antioch can accomplish the stated goal.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

Discussion Scenario II

An interesting drama has unfolded over the past year at Antioch Community College which has caused some to question the institution's frequent claim to be an institution of lifelong learning.

A year ago, a survey administered to a target group of potential adult learners exposed several gaps in service. In general, respondents asked that Antioch expand the times, places, and methods of learning that they offered. Specific strategies they recommended included viable day care, more fast-track, weekend, and home-based study options, credit for experience, and longer library hours.

As a result of this survey, your Lifelong Learning Task Force was appointed and has worked for a full academic year on recommendations for improvement. In the process, however, you have found yourself embroiled in considerable controversy. In effect, many of your colleagues believe you to be questioning heretofore sacrosanct aspects of college life—teaching loads and schedules, space utilization, and staffing patterns. Now, to keep the process from becoming further stalemated, your group has gotten the okay to develop a pilot project—an "alternative college"—that would respond to many community survey requests in new and innovative ways, but would also keep initial efforts comparatively small, voluntary, and thus low threat.

Today your assignment is to design the broad outlines of this alternative college.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

Discussion Scenario III

With the stated goal of improving articulation and strengthening the 2+2+2 partnerships that involve Antioch Community College and the largest feeder high school and four-year receiver institution in the service area, your three-way faculty discussion group—dubbed Crosswork—has been meeting regularly. Although the twice monthly meetings have continued as scheduled for a semester, frankly the conversations have often seemed unproductive. Discussion remains uninspired because of the general belief that the participating institutions back home lack the organizational will and commitment to make substantive change.

Last month, in order to get things off dead center, you decided to plan a "bold new experiment" which you will bring to the leadership of all three institutions as an action item. You also agreed to the following groundrules:

- each of the three entities will share authority and resources in roughly equal proportions;
- the project will in some way focus on improving instruction and will carefully consider student interests;
- the project will avoid adding another layer of bureaucracy;
- it will address the predictable personal concerns and lack of trust that such a project typically engenders;
- it will apply technology as feasible.

**Today your Crosswork Team's assignment is
to design as much of this experiment as possible.**

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

Discussion Scenario IV

At Antioch Community College, the Business and Professional Center (B&PC), an entrepreneurial unit providing various forms of training to the business community, has become quite successful. Using a fees-for-service formula, it has begun to generate income above its operating budget. As a result, flush with success, the head of the B&PC has recently requested that this unit be allowed to plow these dollars back into the center's programs. Even though such an approach has never been tried at Antioch before, there is a feeling among a cross section of staff that this may well be a good time to experiment.

Your Incentives Committee, appointed by the leadership team, is now looking at this possibility. Basically, you have been asked to recommend an answer to the following question: *How should money generated by the entrepreneurial activity of a particular unit be allocated within the college?* As a result of previous discussions, your committee has thus far determined that it will recommend—on an experimental basis—a new approach. You have also agreed that this approach will adhere to the following principles:

- it will reward teams or units, not individuals;
- it will minimize any aspects of competitiveness that might be debilitating to the culture as a whole;
- it will emphasize intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards;
- it will be simple to implement.

Today's assignment is to determine what specific recommendations you wish to make.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

Discussion Scenario V

During the past academic year at Antioch Community College, a seemingly simple decision-making assignment—how and when to administer an organizational climate survey to the college—has stretched interminably across the full academic year and has yet to be resolved.

Here is the history. As is typical of decision making at Antioch, your Climate Committee was named at the beginning of the fall term. You studied the charge, set up a process and timetable, and met frequently as a study group. Then, in an earnest attempt to involve all college employees in the decision, small subgroups from the committee visited and gathered input from virtually every unit of the college. Unaccountably, this broad-based process led to many false alarms, rumors, and special interest requests, created substantial resistance in some quarters to administering the survey, and slowed the process to a virtual halt.

Now, as frustrated as you are, Antioch's president has asked your Climate Committee to set aside its initial charge for the moment and examine instead what can be done to expedite collegial decision making at Antioch. You have already identified three issues—lack of trust, an over-reliance on consensus building, and a general confusion about who can make final decisions.

Today your task is to flesh out several recommendations to expedite decision making at the college that you will then present to the president.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

Discussion Scenario VI

For some time, professional development at Antioch Community College has been in decline, with fewer resources supporting it and various development activities proceeding in episodic, almost random ways. However, quite recently, strategic planning at the college and changing circumstances in the community have convinced college leadership that the renewal/restructuring of professional development is critical to the college's future.

As a result, your Benchmarking Team has been asked to look at a variety of professional development programs across the region and make recommendations about a new program for Antioch. After traveling to several communities and visiting a range of organizations, your group reports these strong overall impressions: *the best programs allocate considerably more time and resources and offer more incentives for professional development than Antioch.* In effect, these organizations have undertaken the continuous development of their employees.

Armed with these impressions, your Benchmarking Team is ready to conceptualize the elements of a *carefully planned, ongoing professional development program* for Antioch, one capable of preparing the college for the future. In accepting this charge, you know that you will have to address significant logistical concerns if you are to provide the necessary time, resources, and incentives for this initiative. How, for example, can the college adjust its structures and schedules to make continuous learning for staff a reality?

Today, your Benchmarking Team's assignment is to outline key elements of this program.

NOTES AND COMMENTS:

APPENDIX A

DIALOGUE FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

Names & Titles of Interview/Survey Candidates

January, 1994

Richard Alfred
Associate Professor of Higher Education
University of Michigan

George A. Baker, III
Joseph D. Moore Distinguished Professor
North Carolina State University

Trudy Banta, Vice Chancellor for Planning
and Institutional Improvement
Indiana University-Purdue University

George Boggs, Superintendent/President
Palomar College
1993/94 AACC Board Chair

Walter Bumphus, President
Brookhaven College

K. Patricia Cross, Conner Professor
University of California at Berkeley

Alfredo de los Santos, Vice Chancellor for
Educational Development
Maricopa Community Colleges
Pew Advisory Council

Paul Elsner, Chancellor
Maricopa Community Colleges

Patsy Fulton, Chancellor
Oakland Community College

Robert A. Gordon, President
Humber College of Applied Arts & Technology

James L. Hudgins, President
Midlands Technical College

Theodore J. Marchese, Vice President
American Association for Higher Education

Robert McCabe, President
Miami-Dade Community College

Byron McClenney, President
Community College of Denver

Kay McClenney, Vice President
Education Commission of the States

Terry O'Banion, Executive Director
League for Innovation in the
Community College

Connie Odems, Senior Vice President
American Association of Community Colleges

Jerry Owens, President
Cuyahoga Community College

Dale Parnell, Professor of Education
Oregon State University

David Pierce, President
American Association of Community Colleges

John Roueche, Professor
Sid W. Richardson Regents Chair
Community College Leadership Program
University of Texas at Austin

Suanne P. Roueche, Director,
National Institute for Staff &
Organizational Development
University of Texas at Austin

Beverly Simone, District Director/CEO
Madison Area Technical College
Past AACC Board Chair

Tessa Pollack, Vice President
Miami-Dade Community College
Medical Center Campus

Ray Taylor, President
American Association of
Community College Trustees

Lawrence W. Tyree, President
Santa Fe Community College

J. William Wenrich, Chancellor
Dallas County Community College District

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